

## **Mentored Youth Hunting Program - Guidelines for Mentors**

The Mentored Youth Hunting Program offers a great opportunity to teach children under 10 years old hunting skills and about the important role hunting plays in wildlife management. It is also a great way to pass along Michigan's rich outdoor traditions and conservation heritage. The program is designed to recruit youth into outdoor recreation at an earlier age. Studies show if children do not have an interest in an activity before age 10, it is unlikely they will continue with that activity later in life.

The program is geared toward parents and other adult mentors who want to teach children under the age of 10 how to hunt, trap and fish. It eliminates the minimum hunting age in Michigan, and allows parents to decide if and when their child is ready to go hunting.

Under a new state law, the Department of Natural Resources will establish this new program for the 2012 hunting season. The law states:

- The DNR will sell a Mentored Youth Hunting license in 2012 for \$7.50.
- The license is a "package license" that entitles the youth hunter to hunt small game, turkey (spring and fall) on private or public land, deer (two tags, any deer); trap furbearers and fish for all species.
- A mentor must be at least 21 years old and have previous hunting experience and possess a current Michigan hunting license.

Regulations for the program were approved by the Michigan Natural Resources Commission. The regulations for the program include:

- A limit of two hunting devices (firearm, crossbow or bow) per mentor.
- No limit on the number of children a mentor can have in the field with him or her.
- A youth hunter must be within arm's length of the mentor at all times when handling a hunting device and when in the act of hunting.
- The mentor shall ensure the hunting device is properly fitted and appropriately suited for the youth hunter.
- The mentor is responsible for the youth hunter's actions in the field.
- The youth hunter's deer tags can be used to hunt with archery or crossbow equipment on public or private lands, or with a firearm on private or Commercial Forest lands only.

Here are some guidelines the DNR recommends for adults who want to mentor a youth hunter. These guidelines are designed with safety in mind at all times, and to ensure an enjoyable experience for the youth hunter and mentor.

1. First and foremost, as a mentor, you are responsible for the safety of your youth hunter and their actions in the field.
2. Though it is not required until age 10, the DNR strongly advises to have your youth hunter attend a [hunting safety course](#).
3. If the youth hunter is not your own child, secure permission directly from his or her parent or guardian before taking the child hunting. Do not rely on the child to secure permission from his or

her parents.

4. Even though there is no restriction on a mentor hunting with a youth hunter, remember that this is about teaching a child how to hunt, and is not about your own hunting experience. It is recommended you focus your efforts on your youth hunter, so he or she has a positive experience and wants to continue hunting.
5. While there are no limits on the number of children you can take out for mentored youth hunting, the DNR strongly advises to be aware of your ability to manage more than one or two children afield.
6. Ensure that whatever hunting device (firearm, crossbow or bow) you plan to use with the youth is properly fitted to and appropriately suited (caliber and gauge) for that youth. A properly fitted hunting device will make this an enjoyable experience for your youth hunter.
7. Never presume a child can handle all hunting devices, and never pressure a youth hunter to try a hunting device they don't want to try or don't feel comfortable with. Also, youth hunters not accustomed to carrying a hunting device while walking in the woods or field should be guided with extra caution. Consider carrying the hunting device yourself until you and the youth hunter are properly situated at your hunting location.
8. Remember to provide ear and eye protection for your hunter/s.
9. Have a plan for a medical emergency. Know any medical issues that the youth hunter may have. If you have a serious emergency while in the field, call 911 first or transport the youth to the nearest hospital, and then notify the parent or guardian.
10. Remember that hunting with children is not like hunting with an adult. Children will get cold, bored and hungry in the woods. Make sure your youth hunter is dressed warmly in layers and is wearing hunter orange when appropriate. Pack some snacks and beverages to take in the field. And when the child wants to leave the woods, you should leave the woods.
11. Have a plan for bathroom breaks. Make a plan to ensure privacy.
12. Mentors should provide some basic outdoor skills to a youth hunter, such as how to read a compass and recognize game species, trespass rules, respect for game laws and basic first aid.
13. Mentoring can also include scouting for game, how to recognize game signs in the woods and basic firearm safety rules. Practice firearm safety with your youth hunter before going out in the field.
14. Practice shooting skills with your youth hunter to make sure he or she is capable of a quick, humane kill. This will ensure a positive experience in the woods.